

---

The Evolution of Japanese Diplomacy

Author(s): Masujiro Honda

Source: *The Journal of Race Development*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Oct., 1912), pp. 188-200

Published by:

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/29737952>

Accessed: 17/07/2014 19:31

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at  
<http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



<http://www.jstor.org>

## THE EVOLUTION OF JAPANESE DIPLOMACY

*By Masujiro Honda, Litt.D., editor of the "Oriental Review"*

Diplomacy is of absorbing interest always, for it often determines the destiny of a nation, of a continent—even of a race. If the result is sometimes unpleasant to one party or the other, or to both, this is merely incidental. To harm others is not its aim; the true object of this intellectual, international wrestling being to decide which of the parties concerned is the better entitled to the honor, and the responsibility as well, of promoting the welfare of mankind by standing for an ideal, for a system, for a form of civilization. It is true enough that there are intellectual games in which each move is in secret and the purpose of which is to befog the opponent as much as possible; but there are others which require no concealment of the hands or moves, and in which each player seeks only to do his best without desiring the ill of others. The medieval, military type of diplomacy is represented by the first kind, and the second stand for the modern, industrial type. This is, however, a general statement which does not apply to many individual cases. The diplomacy to be used with Russia, for instance, must necessarily be different from that with the United States; nor can the *modus operandi* applicable to Germany be successfully adopted in dealing with China. The nature of this paper compels occasional allusion to other nations than Japan, but any such allusion is not meant in the spirit of captious criticism, for the diplomatic game requires at least two players. Something of what had been accomplished in the dark between China and Russia, Japan inherited in Manchuria in the broad daylight of public gaze; and there is still a great deal left unsuspected and unearthed concerning what is taking place in Mongolia, Ili and Tibet.

All this, however, will become more intelligible when translated into the terms of American diplomacy. In this country of free thought and free speech there are those who do not hesitate to prophesy an eventual annexation or absorption, economically of course, of Canada or Mexico. But both the Washington authorities and the people in general have never planned or schemed for such an eventuality. Only "geographical gravitation," or the "finger of destiny," or "unavoidable circumstance" may thrust upon the United States the necessity of taking under American protection, not only the next door neighbors of the Union, but also some republics on this and the other side of the Panama canal. The Monroe doctrine claims to prevent other nations from acquiring territory on this continent, but it does not purpose to interfere with this country's obtaining new possessions either on this continent or elsewhere. Contrast this condition with that in China and Japan with their, if unpronounced, still worthy ambition of keeping Asia for the Asiatics, keenly awake as they are to the fact that the occidental powers are already firmly intrenched on the continent of Asia, while the United States presses for the territorial integrity of and the open-door in China. The two Asiatic powers must be left free to solve the problems which concern themselves, but when a question arises which concerns the common destiny of both—then whether China shall lead Japan or Japan lead China, becomes a consideration of minor importance before the appalling dilemma whether there shall be an independent Asia or not. It is a question for the Asian of life or death, for one-third of the population of the earth have no other continent upon which to settle, except the one that is already so thickly populated. Europe is of course for the Europeans; the continent of America is also destined apparently to be a land of non-Asiatics. The Asian is also barred from Africa, from Australia and from New Zealand. There is no open door for Asiatic immigrants in these countries and continents, but there must be free entrance for all mankind into Asia. Readjustment and revision of the relations of Asia to the rest of the world should be the highest aim of

Japanese and Chinese diplomacy, and this aim can be attained only through our gradual rise in national and racial efficiency on the one hand; and, on the other, through sincere efforts on both sides to understand one another. The following sketch of the evolution of Japanese diplomacy will, it is hoped, at once illustrate how the international dealing of a nation depends for its success on the material efficiency and moral vigor of that nation, as well as contribute something toward the mutual understanding of the east and the west by indicating what foreign policy Japan is likely to pursue in the future.

For the sake of argument, it may be admitted that diplomacy is the practice of maintaining and extending national power in international dealings; national power including honor, prestige and moral influence as well as material interests. Japan's earliest contact with the outer world was with Korea, China and India, and from them she acquired Confucianism, Buddhism and the Asiatic arts and sciences, while taking care not to be subject to either their political or intellectual domination. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the Portuguese began to visit Japan's shores, as a sequence to their attempt to extend not only their trade but also their religious and political influence. For about a century, Jesuit missionaries and European traders were welcome in Japan; the Japanese themselves were active in sea-faring and engaged in trade with South Sea Islanders. As a result of Dutch-Spanish rivalry in India and elsewhere, however, Protestant Holland warned Japan of the grave danger of falling under the carefully concealed political influence of the Catholic nations. Before, however, this alarm was sounded, the feudal authorities of Japan had already become aware that native converts to Christianity and their European teachers were more than likely to jeopardize the national integrity of Japan. The policy of the closed-door was adopted, native Christians were persecuted and Jesuit missionaries banished, only a limited number of Dutch and Chinese traders being permitted to come to a tiny island in the harbor of Nagasaki, while the construction of large ocean-going vessels was pro-

hibited to the Japanese. This policy of seclusion continued for two centuries down to 1853, when the flood-gate of western civilization was opened through pressure of the United States.

This retrospect suggests a certain speculation. Suppose Japan had continued in touch with Catholic Europe in spite of the Dutch warning, what would have happened? The land of the Rising Sun might have been reduced to the position of the Philippines, with more Christianity perhaps, but certainly not much of political independence left. What would have become of China, if Japan had been lost to Europe, say in the seventeenth century? When a Catholic monarchy was again pressing hard on Japan from the north, a Protestant republic came to our rescue from the western hemisphere as the same power later rescued the Philippines from Catholic domination. Suppose a diplomatic miracle should happen to Japan now, so that she would be guaranteed the undisturbed safety of the present position without spending a penny on army and navy, with what eagerness and determination the entire population of Japan would devote themselves to a higher attainment of all the arts of peace and lend their moral and financial support to the four hundred millions of their neighbors now struggling for a better government. Is this not practically what America and England did in Japan's conflict with the northern power?

From these and other endless reveries we must return to actualities to bring this paper within the required limits.

Early in the last century, Europe's attention began to turn from the Mediterranean and western Asia to the Far East. England's strong position in India necessitated the opium war which marked the beginning of territorial aggression on China in 1842. Russia, on the other hand, had become a Pacific power as early as the seventeenth century through the possession of the Amur region, and, when she proclaimed her ownership of Kamtchatka in 1707, Japan came in direct contact with her. The Island of Ezo, the Kurile group and Saghalien were frequented by Russians, and begun to be absorbed by them. In 1861, several years after the conclusion of the first Russo-Japanese treaty of

amity and trade, Russia occupied the island of Tsushima as a coaling station and it took half a year before she was persuaded to evacuate the place, through the joint-protest of the British minister at Yedo and the commander of the British East Asian Squadron. After the Restoration, in 1872, Japan offered to buy the Russian portion of Saghalien for a sum of 2,000,000 *yen*, but, instead, a nominal exchange of Saghalien with the Kurile Islands was eventually effected three years later.

Thus, the Dutch-British rivalry, which was partly responsible for Japan's refusal to trade with the English in the seventeenth century, gave place to the Russo-British competition for power in Asia in the nineteenth century. Excepting the fact that an English captain hoisted the Union Jack upon the Bonin Islands, situated on the sea-route from North America to south China, Great Britain had not affected Japan politically, because she was too busy with the opening up of China and planting her commercial interests there. This same group of islands above mentioned was subsequently claimed as an American possession, but the moderation of the United States government brought the controversy to a happy termination in 1875, when finally it recognized Japan's claim to its possession. Commodore Perry's idea of occupying a Japanese island, however, was not suggested by any motive directly antagonistic to Japan. The wonderful development of the Pacific states of this country and the discovery of California gold in 1848 compelled the United States to turn her attention to the Pacific trade, and it was most providential that Japan was introduced to the comity of nations by a peaceful and generous friend across the ocean. The vacillating weak foreign policy lent a suitable pretext for arousing the whole nation into a patriotic revolt against the feudal authorities, resulting in the restoration of full power to the emperor in 1868. Long before Japan's door was opened to western nations, France had warned, through a missionary on the spot, of British designs on the Loochoo Islands and told the islanders that the only way of escape was to treat with France to check Great Britain. The feudal government of Japan,

therefore, trained its soldiers after the French model, France being considered the strongest military power of the day. This marked the beginning of Japanese diplomacy being influenced by Franco-British rivalry in European politics. In the time of our revolutionary trouble, France naturally sympathized with the old régime, while England supported the strong clans espousing the imperial cause. In consequence, therefore, when the new government came into existence, the British minister, Sir Harry Parks, exerted great influence over the men whose political aims England had secretly furthered. It is indeed a matter for thankfulness that he did not take undue advantage of his position to endanger the territorial integrity of Japan.

The imperial government organized the foreign office as an independent department in 1869, but its work could not but be negative or defensive in nature, as was the case with our diplomacy under the feudal régime, its sole aim and effort being to endeavor to lose as little as possible of our material possessions and to maintain our national dignity, as best as we could. In 1871, when a newly appointed British chargé d'affaires arrived in Tokio, he desired that the emperor receive him in audience according to occidental etiquette, which demand was firmly rejected by the Japanese government as infringing upon international courtesy. When, however, the Russian minister requested an imperial audience, declaring that he would conform to any recognized rules of politeness adopted by the court, the emperor at once received him in European fashion. In the following year, 1872, a Peruvian steamer, with 230 Chinese laborers on board, anchored in Yokohama, whereupon the British representative heretofore mentioned, intimated to the Japanese foreign office that these Chinese coolies, being actual slaves, should be sent back to their own country. This advice was at once acted upon, although it is worth noting that certain of the cabinet members of the time opposed this emancipation lest it might lead to international complications, while the French minister at Tokio ridiculed the idea of Japan standing for humanity, and the United States minister also suggested the wisdom of non-interference in



the matter on the part of the Japanese authorities. In spite of all opposition and every possible obstacle, however, the governor of Kanagawa was instructed to seize the Peruvian vessel and send back the slaves to China. The government of Peru, on hearing of this incident, despatched an envoy to Japan to protest against it. The matter was finally referred to the arbitration of the Czar of Russia, whose award was entirely in favor of Japan. This created a new precedent in international law.

Some Loochoo islanders, stranded on the island of Formosa, were massacred by the aborigines in 1872, and in the following year a special envoy was despatched to Peking to demand satisfaction. The Chinese authorities claimed that the Loochuans were also Chinese subjects and that the Formosan savages were beyond the power of Chinese control. Seeing that nothing could be accomplished through diplomatic negotiations, the Japanese government in 1874 sent an armed expedition to chastise the Formosans. The Peking government resented this as an infringement on China's territorial rights; and the Japanese ambassador retorted that China having acknowledged her inability to punish these offenders, the Formosans, if left unchastised, would commit similar outrages so giving an excuse to some occidental power to annex Formosa, so that Japan's successful expedition was in effect practically in common defense of both China and Japan. China at length consented to pay an indemnity to Japan, acknowledging the latter's sovereignty over Loochoo, and admitting, also, that she was responsible for the acts of the Formosan aborigines. In 1879, however, when General Grant visited the Far East, the Chinese government applied to the ex-president for mediation because it was not satisfied with the way in which the Loochoo question had been settled. Eventually however, the two islands of Miyako and Yaeyama were ceded to China to remove any ill-feeling between the neighboring nations, who ought to be, as General Grant put it, coöperating in warm friendship against western aggression.

The so-called *exchange* of Saghalien for the Kurile group of islands was effected in 1874 after a prolonged and vexa-



tious negotiation with Russia. In fact the Russian descent upon northern Japan was a question that troubled the minds of the Japanese both under the feudal and imperial régime, and Japan was glad enough to agree to this sham exchange, a sham because she believed in her right to claim both, in preference to the perpetual menace to her territorial integrity.

The revision of the unilateral, unequal treaties made with the European and American powers occupied the zealous attention of Japanese diplomatists for more than twenty years, that is between 1871-1894, the main contention being the removal of extraterritorial consular jurisdiction and of a clause which deprived Japan of tariff autonomy, both imposed upon her through the inexperience of more or less impotent officials in the early days of her renewed intercourse with the occident. To this end, various diplomatic methods were tried in quick succession with the hope of impressing the western peoples with the fact that the Japanese were worthy of being considered as equals. At one time the adoption of the Roman alphabet was advocated by some as the simplest and so the best method of writing the Japanese language. An improvement of the Japanese physique and stature was suggested as likely to come as the result of mixed marriages with the Caucasian race. European dress and dancing were encouraged in official circles and elsewhere. All these measures, however, did not influence the attitude of the treaty powers, but merely fanned into a flame the conservative and reactionary sentiment of the people. Men were exiled from the capital or the country, but the idea of Japan for the Japanese grew stronger and stronger, until finally one minister of foreign affairs, who endeavored to secure a treaty revision through agreeing to place occidental judges in Japanese courts of law, was attacked by a fanatical patriot with a bomb and had to sacrifice his portfolio as well as a leg. At another period, a rigorous enforcement of treaty terms to the letter was tried, so that foreigners in Japan would realize the need of a revised bi-lateral treaty. This scheme also failed, because the foreigners merely complained of personal inconvenience,

while some indiscreet patriots went to the extent of insulting occidental residents in the country. A complete codification of laws, incorporating the best principles and usages of Europe and America, was accomplished in due time, and the first session of the imperial diet assembled in 1890 in accordance with the provisions of the constitution. As a finishing touch, as it were, to all these laborious preparations, the justice and success of the China-Japanese war of 1894-1895 accelerated the work of treaty revision, so that Japan has since been on the footing of legal equality with the great nations of the world.

With the Chinese war in 1894-1895 Japan entered her second stage of diplomatic experience, the stage in which an active self-assertion of her conscious power became the dominant note. It was, in one sense, a conflict of modernism and medievalism, because Japan wished to keep Korea independent and progressive as a buffer state between the two Asiatic powers, while China insisted upon her patronage of a conservative and subservient Korea. Diplomatically speaking, however, Japan's victory in arms ended in a signal defeat on the field of the political game, a triple combination of European powers stepping in and wresting from her a substantial portion of her acquisition from China. One blunder begot another. In the consternation of this diplomatic humiliation, Japan failed to think of restoring the Liaotung Peninsula on the explicit condition that China would never cede or lease her territory to any outside power, which alone would have obviated the necessity of fighting Russia ten years later. Through her victory in arms, Japan vindicated her claim to respect as an Asiatic power, and also testified to the superiority of occidental methods over oriental systems. Through her failure in diplomacy, Japan realized the need of political allies and friends in Europe and America, for after all Asia was not strong enough to be independent of European politics and the European balance of power. The triple intervention aforesaid claimed that Japan's possession of any part of continental Chinese territory was inimical to the peace of the Far East. Notwithstanding all this, one of the parties soon began to exact

from China material remuneration for ousting Japan, and proposed, amongst other things, an occupation of that very part of China whose ownership by Japan was represented to be subversive of peace and order in Asia. Another of the triangular league later "leased" another part of China for ninety-nine years for the murder of one or two missionaries. The deletion of European politics from Korea and Manchuria became an absolute and alarming necessity for the independence and integrity of Japan herself. With England as her ally, and the United States as her moral supporter, and with almost universal European and American sympathy, enabling her to raise war funds abroad, Japanese forces were victorious both on land and sea, but—Japanese diplomacy was again outwitted by its adversary over the chess board at Portsmouth, all this largely because Japan neglected to interest the press of the world in her cause and claims, while the Russian side of the story was ably, tactfully and appealingly presented to more than one hundred journalists of all nationalities. Newspaper men exist on the reporting or "making" of news. It is no cause for wonder therefore that they should have shown scant affection for the country which gave them, through its representatives—nothing. Russian diplomacy was particularly successful in so pleading its case to the American government, through its chief executive, and to the American public, through the press, as to arouse the vague but none the less disquieting fear that Japan might one day occupy both the Russian and Chinese coast of the Asiatic Pacific, and next descend upon the Philippines, Guam, Hawaii, and finally upon the Pacific slope of this western continent. This to our view was the true inception of the rumors of a pending conflict between the United States and Japan; disaffected journalists, labor leaders, big-army-and-navy-ists, better-national-defense-men, and even temperance orators invoking the name of Japan as scapegoat.

Political alliances, ententes and conventions, coupled with an intelligent interest and sympathetic attitude of the press, important and essential as they are to diplomatic success, must necessarily lead up to the higher stage of development

into which Japan is just entering; and this final culmination of diplomatic effort is nothing more or less than an assiduous cultivation of a mutual understanding by the masses, over and above the governments and the press, of the needs and necessities of each country, bound together with others in the bond of commerce and friendship. Through the immigration question, through the recent revision of Japan's treaties with the United States and with the European powers, through the boycotting of Japanese goods by Chinese, through Japan's negotiations with Russia to facilitate railway connections between the Japanese and Russian sections of the Manchurian Railway, as well as through the altering of the terms of the Anglo-Japanese alliance to make the Anglo-American treaty for general arbitration easier of accomplishment—all these varied experiences have driven home to Japanese diplomacy that most important lesson—that it is not by “saving one's face,” in an abstract way, not by territorial acquisition and expansion, both of which have only resulted in inspiring the rest of the world with an altogether exaggerated sense of Japanese pride and ambition, but that it is only when backed by industrial and commercial expansion and prosperity that a nation can maintain and extend its moral and material influence in its foreign relations; and that national wealth can be increased only by making friends, sometimes rivals if necessary, with manufacturers, sellers and buyers of different nationalities, not certainly by frightening or fighting them. Some people may contemptuously call this “dollar diplomacy,” but “dollar diplomacy” is nothing but the democratic, industrial, honest, peaceful, twentieth century type of diplomacy, in contradistinction to the bureaucratic, military, underhanded, belligerent, medieval type of diplomacy which must be relegated to the limbo of the benighted.

It may throw a side light on our main thesis, if we add here a phase of our diplomatic service. Aside from foreign advisers to the various departments of the imperial government (one of whom we still retain and treasure in the foreign office) Japan has been represented abroad entirely by her own diplomats from the very beginning. Naturally, trained

and experienced diplomats were few if any, at first, At one time, old nobles were made ministers and ambassadors to utilize the glitter of their gold and rank for impressing foreign nations with the importance of the country they represented. They failed in most cases, however, to enhance Japan's prestige abroad, because their wealth or rank was poverty or obscurity in the great countries of Europe and America. At another time ability was the only standard for our diplomatic officials, so some of them could do nothing but study books and newspapers in their legation offices, not having money enough to shine in society. At present all diplomatic and consular agents have to pass special examinations and begin their career from the lowest post, the system thus endeavoring to combine ability and experience. When a bright diplomat happens to have money of his own he is likely to be most successful in a foreign capital. A Japanese diplomat with a foreign wife is still a problem. Our practice of transferring diplomats from one country to another in two or three years is open to criticism; it has advantages and disadvantages of its own. One good sign at home, however, is a tendency to detach the foreign policy of the government from party dispute, the continuity of purpose and unity in methods being thus assured, without occasional disturbance from politicians who lack in expert knowledge and experience. The foreign office at Tokio, moreover, was more or less under the influence of the army and navy departments until quite recently, because, in matters relating to national independence and self-defense military and strategical considerations had often to precede or accompany diplomatic proceedings. Now that Japan's political status in the world is perhaps secure, our diplomacy is more directly representative of the economic interests of the people.

With regard to the further working of this industrial stage of Japanese diplomacy, we may better quote an English author as a fit conclusion of this paper, instead of venturing upon a risky attempt at prophesy:

Everything in fact tends to show that within a comparatively short space of time Japan will have asserted her position, not only as a great world power, but as a great commercial nation in the Pacific. What is to be the outcome of it all, is the question that will naturally arise to the mind. I think that one outcome of it will be, as I have shown, the capture by Japan of the Chinese trade, if not in its entirety, at any rate in a very large degree. Another outcome will, I believe, be the enormous development of Japanese trade with both the United States and Canada. Some people may remark that these are not essentially political matters, and that I am somewhat wandering from my point in treating of them in connection with the influence of Japan upon the world generally. I do not think so. A nation may assert its influence and emphasize its importance to just as great an extent by its trade as by the double-dealings of diplomacy or by other equally questionable methods. Of one thing I am convinced, and that is that the influence of Japan upon the rest of the world will be a singularly healthy one. That country has fortunately struck out for itself, in diplomacy as in other matters, a new line. It has not behind it any traditions, nor before it prejudices wherewith to impede its progress. The diplomacy of Japan will, accordingly, be conducted in a straight-forward manner, and its record so far in this respect has, I think, provided a splendid object-lesson for the rest of the world. The influence of Japan upon other nations will I hope as I believe, continue to be a healthy one. If that country sets forth prominently the fact that while aspiring to be great, it possesses none of those attributes of greed, covetousness, aggressiveness, and overbearing—an arrogant attitude in regard to weaker powers, it will have performed a notable service in the history of the world. For myself I have no doubt whatever that Japan will teach this lesson, and in teaching it will have justified the great place that she has attained among the nations of the earth.—*The Empire of the East*, by H. B. Montgomery, 1909.